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# THE ZAZA PEOPLE AS A NEW ETHNO-POLITICAL FACTOR IN THE REGION

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Despite the fact that the global ethnic formation processes have been generally completed, even now, at the end of the 20th century, we sometimes become the witnesses to the birth of new ethnic-national units, which in appropriate situations can be developed into an important regional political factor. This phenomenon is determined by the resurrection of national self-consciousness, creating a new national identity, as well as by regional political developments and inner ethnic processes.

A good illustration of the above is the 4-5 million Zaza people in Central Anatolia. In spite of their distinct national identity and ethnic consciousness, the Zazas have never claimed their separate existence, as they have for centuries been surrounded by the Kurds, the people with a homogeneous language and close culture. Therefore, in the "outer world" they have been always considered as a part of the Kurds, a so-called "Kurdish tribe". The national identity of the Zaza has always been under the shadow of the Kurdish ethnic and national prevalence, and during the last century and a half, it has been totally suppressed by the Kurd's political strivings manifested in numerous movements.

Rare and often contradictory materials left by travelers or those originating from lands inhabited by the Zazas (Armenian intellectuals, etc.), were later supplemented with the new research of Orientalists, mostly Kurdologists, who made special studies of the Zazas. But neither the descriptive accounts of the former (L. Molyneux-Seel, Andranik, N. Talawarian, S. Haykuni, A. Mkrtchian) nor purely academic works of the latter (F. Spiegel, V. Minorsky, F. Andreas, D. Mackenzie, G. Asatrian, etc.) take into consideration the political background of the Zaza question. However, the present situation both within Zaza society and around it (in particular, the actualization of the Kurdish problem) allows us to speak about the above mentioned formation of a new ethno-political factor in the region.

The Zazas live mainly in Dersim (present-day Tunceli), between Erzincan in the north and the Murad-su river in the south, in the far west of historical Upper Armenia, as well as in Bingol, Mush, the province of Diyarbakir, Siverek, Sivas etc.

Rather a big Zaza diaspora - about half a million people - live in Europe, mainly in Germany.

The emergence of the Zazas on the present inhabited territories is connected with the waves of migrations from Daylam, the highlands of Gilan, during the 10-12 centuries which is reflected in their ethnonym - **Dim(i)li**. The theory of the Caspian origin of the Zazas is substantiated both linguistically (the Zaza language is a North-West Iranian dialect close to Talishi, Azari, Gilyaki, etc.) and historically (there are authentic historical data about the migration of the Daylamits to Central Anatolia) (*see in detail with full literature: G.S. Asatrian. Dim(i)li. - EIr., VII/IV, pp. 405-411*).

Up to now the Armenians call this people *Dəlmik*, the term which goes back to Mid-

dle Iranian \**dēlmik*, i.e. *daylamit*, the dweller of Daylam. Among the Armenians, the Zazas are also known as Zaza-Krder, i.e. Zaza-Kurds – the fact, which by no means shows the identification of the Zazas with the Kurds, but rather distinguishes them as a specific group from a common Kurdish background. The Zazas are also called *duzhik* (after the name of a mountain – the object of worshipping among the people), *charktsi* (the origin of this name is unknown) or *qizilbash*. The usage of the latter term, though rather a common one, is not quite substantiated because of its obvious Turkic ethnic attribution.

The name *Zaza* was initially used by the neighbouring peoples as a pejorative characteristic (*zaza* means *stutterer*) due to specific phonetic system of the language of the Zazas, which is the only one among the North-West Iranian dialects having single-focused affricates – the undoubted influence of the Armenian language.

By the way, the Armenian influence can be traced not only in the Zaza language, but also in the specific religion, world-vision concepts, as well as spiritual and material culture of this people. Up to the 30s, i.e. before the deportation of the last neighbouring Armenians from the region, the Zazas also spoke Armenian. A part of the Armenians preferred to stay on their native lands, having adopted Alevism as their religion and the epithet *dönma* (i.e. *proselyte*, *convert*) as a name given to them by the Zazas. The *dönmas* definitely know about their Armenian origin.

Apart from the language, there is at least one more characteristic distinguishing the Zazas among the other ethnic groups of the region – it is their religion, which fair definition was given by N. Adonts: “Qizilbashes and the dwellers of Dersim profess a religion which differs both from Christianity and Islam. Their beliefs are based on the mixture of Christian and Manichean doctrines with an outward veneer of Islam” (*N. Adonts. Towards the Solution of the Armenian Questions. London, 1920, pp.11-12*). However, there is a considerable number of the Zazas – followers of Sunna, Orthodox Islam.

In fact, in spite of the Alevi attribution of the Zazas, they have not very much in common with other extreme Shi‘a sects. Even ‘Ali who is deified by all of them, has rather a formal or even marginal position in the religious conceptions of the Zazas. The religion, having concentrated in it local pre-Islamic cults and Christian (mainly Armenian) substratum, is sometimes called by the Turkish Sufi term *yol-ushaqi* - “the followers of the (true) Path”. Like other extreme Shi‘ites, the Zazas deny their Islamic origin: they call God *Humai*, *Homa* or *Haqq*.

Among the Christian elements, the most illustrative are the following: the cult of St. Serge (Xizir Ilyas - in the Zaza tradition, Surb Sargis – in the Armenian tradition), worshipping Armenian shrines, abandoned temples, monasteries (Halvori vank, Surb Karapet monastery), used by the Zazas for religious rites, alongside with their own prayer houses – *tekke*, etc. As for the ritual practice, it is enough to mention baptizing, in which the neighbouring Armenians used to participate as godfathers. The Zazas have never exercised circumcision (*see in details: G.S. Asatrian, N. Kh.Gevorgian. Zaza miscellany: Notes on some Religious Customs and Institutions. – In: “A Green Leaf”: Papers in Honour of J.P. Asmussen (Acta Iranica - 12). Leiden, 1988, pp.501-508*).

As for the pagan cults, they are mainly presented in the Zaza world-vision, where philosophical and religious concepts, as well as morals and manners, are closely connected and often mixed with each other.

The Zazas worship plants (e.g. oak), mountains (e.g. Duzhik-baba), rivers (e.g. the Murad-su), animals (e.g. snakes), springs, rocks, etc. The cult of snake, for instance, is traditionally presented in the feast *chu-ye haqqi* – *God's stick*, in which the snake is

supposed to be the embodiment of the crosier of God (*see opus cit.*).

There is no centralized religious institution among the Zazas, developing orthodoxy and regulating orthopraxy, so the traditional custodians of the religious doctrines remain certain clans. The spiritual offices – from the highest one, *pir-e piran*, who is the head of the community, and, correspondingly in descending order – *pir*, *seyid*, *dede*, *murshid* and *raybar* – are hereditary. Zaza women enjoy the right to participate in all the religious rites – the tradition, which is common for all extreme Shi‘a sects and which more than once provoked the charge of promiscuity.

Among the specific social-religious aspects of the Zazas is the institution of *musahib* (“*holy brotherhood*”). Similar institutions – *bire axirate* and *xushka axirate* (“*the brother*” and “*the sister of the next world*”) and *shart wa iqrar* (*a complicated term which can be approximately translated as “holy brotherhood”*) – exist also among the Yezidis and Ahl-i Haqq (*see in details: the article of G. Asatrian on this institution among the Yezidis, in this volume*).

All the above described gives a general idea of the people, in which active internal processes are at present exceeding the scopes of the closed system common in former society.

In the modern history of Turkey, the Alevi identity itself presupposes a problematic situation. Starting from the Dersim revolt of 1937-38, the Turkish government has always regarded this part of the country, mainly dwelled by the Zazas, as the most uncontrollable.

If in Iran the extreme Shi‘a ideas were slowly getting closer to the orthodox Shi‘ism of the 12 imams, in Turkey the corresponding development between them and the orthodox Islam did not take place, so that the Turkish Alevis are completely different from their nowadays Iranian brothers-in-belief. The traditional Sunni-Alevi antagonism has old roots, which finds confirmation in the fact, that even the Alevi Kurds are closer to Alevi Turks, than to Sunni Kurds. During the last century this antagonism has grown to political opposition and permanent conflicts in the region.

The most radical Turkish leftists have always founded support just in Tunceli. And it was just Tunceli, which became the main target of the military operation on the reconstruction of law and order after a coup attempt in 1980. And to the building of mosques and spreading of Sunni clerics, another punitive measure was added – the forced dispersion of the local population in different regions of Turkey.

*It is interesting to note, that the political developments in the south of Russia (Northern Caucasus), promising new waves of migration, serves well to the purpose of the Turkish government and explains their position in the problem of the Caucasian muhajirs. New migrants can be further settled in the most “problematic” regions (mainly Kurdish and other ‘Ali oriented communities, including those of Zazas), in order to relieve the political tension provoked by Alevis, to reduce the trends of separatism. (cf. the above mentioned Zazas forced settling apart), and – why not – to promote the process of integration of these least urbanized regions to the modern Turkish society.*

*The migration from the Northern Caucasus to Turkey has more than a century-old tradition: starting from the 20s of the 19th century, continuing during Shamil’s war and the end of his Imamate (1817-1859 and 1859-1877) correspondingly, between both Russian-Turkish wars (1877-1878 and 1893-1895), in the period of the October revolution in Russia, then during*

*and right after the Second world war (this wave of migration concerned mainly war-prisoners) and finishing with the last waves caused by the consequences of the USSR collapse, including the latest North-Caucasian developments. Some of the migrants who settled in the Kurdish inhabited regions, in particular Mush vilayet, had to later leave it, because of the ethnic purge arranged by PKK (see in details: A.M. Магомеддаев, М.К. Мысаева. К истории переселения дагестанцев в Турцию. – Iran and Caucasus: Research Papers from the Caucasian Centre for Iranian Studies, vol. 1, pp. 55-64).*

*And if during all the previous waves the migrants were free to choose among the provinces and even the neighbours (most of them preferred to settle near those originating from the Northern Caucasus as well), this time the Turkish government will probably be more fastidious in this question.*

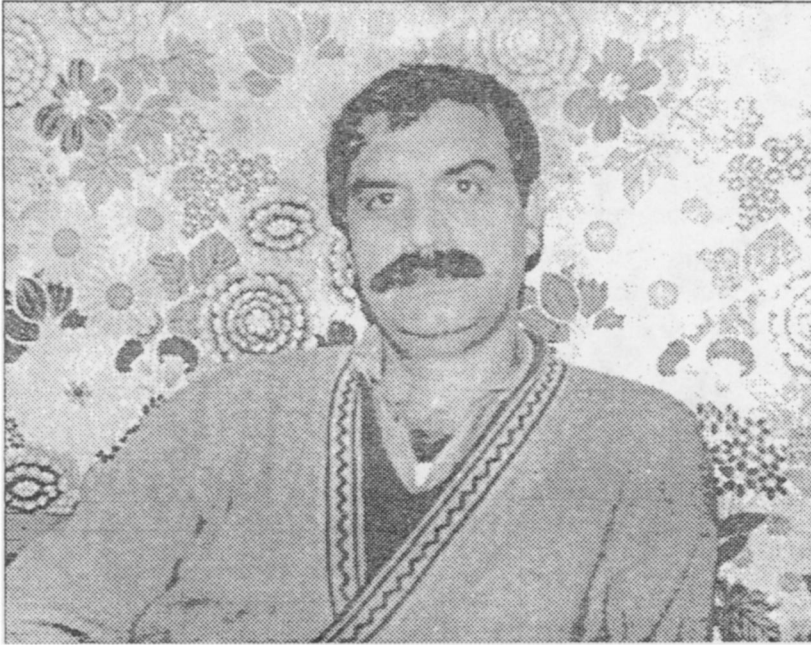
The situation with the Turkish extreme Shi'ites was unexpectedly changed in the 90s, when some religious and cultural feasts of the Alevis were officially recognized. This step was made with several purposes: to alleviate the left radicalism among the youth, to create the opportunity to oppose Alevism with its national characteristics to more and more politicized fundamental Sunnism, and besides, to allay to a certain extent the radical Kurdish movement. (It is a well-known fact, that the Zazas have always taken active part in the Kurdish movement, being its most bellicose constituent.)

On such a political background, a new Alevi elite was formed in 1970-1990, which was mainly presented by intellectuals in the first generation, who were educated in Turkey and later emigrated to Europe. Some of them, after the coup attempt of 1980, had to give up open political activity and to get engaged with so called culturalistic politics. Here came an end to the centuries-old Alevi oral tradition. New intellectuals staked on literature and mass media – not for their own peoples, of course, which were far from being a reading audience, but for the Europeans, in order to attract the attention of the international community to their problems. One can trace several waves of publications: the first one tried to revive the Alevi religious traditions and historical development, the next familiarized the readers with their political ideas and modern tasks (see in details: Karin Vorhoff. *Academic and Journalistic Publications on the Alevi and Bektashi of Turkey. - In: Alevi Identity. Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives, Istanbul, 1998, pp. 23-50*). "The past decade has seen an unprecedented rise in Alevi cultural association, periodicals devoted to exploring the nature of 'Aleviness, television programs, discussion groups debating the "Alevi question" and higher political exposure that they have before known. In short, there is occurring nothing short of the creation of a modern cultural heritage by a people who until recently were mute on the national stage" (David Shankland. *Anthropology and Ethnicity: The Place of Ethnography in the New Alevi Movement. In: Alevi Identity. Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives, Istanbul, 1998, p.15*).

The heart of such activities is Germany: the interest towards Alevism overwhelmed the whole country, so that new centres on Alevi studies constantly appear both among the Alevi diaspora and among the Germans themselves. There are publishing houses specialized exclusively in Alevi topics (e.g. Manfred Backhausen Publishing House in Dusseldorf).

The Zaza intellectuals shared the same path of development: emigration, establishing Zaza cultural and political organizations in Europe and later in other parts of the world: Australia, USA, etc. The specific feature of the Zaza leaders among the com-

mon Alevi trends is the irruption of national self-consciousness. Ebubekir Pamukchu, the founder of the Zaza national movement expressed this idea in the following word: "From that moment I became Zaza". E. Pamukchu was born in Dersim in 1946. Being graduated from a higher college he taught the Turkish language in many parts of the country.



**Ebubekir Pamukchu,**  
*the founder of the Zaza national movement.*  
*Skärholmen, 28 October, 1989*

(Photo: G. Asatrian)

At the age of 20 he joined the leftists and was several times imprisoned for his political activities and seditious poems. In 1989 E. Pamukchu emigrated to Sweden where he continued his work until he died in 1991. Ebubekir Pamukchu was the founder of first periodicals in the Zaza language – "*Ayre*" and "*Piya*".

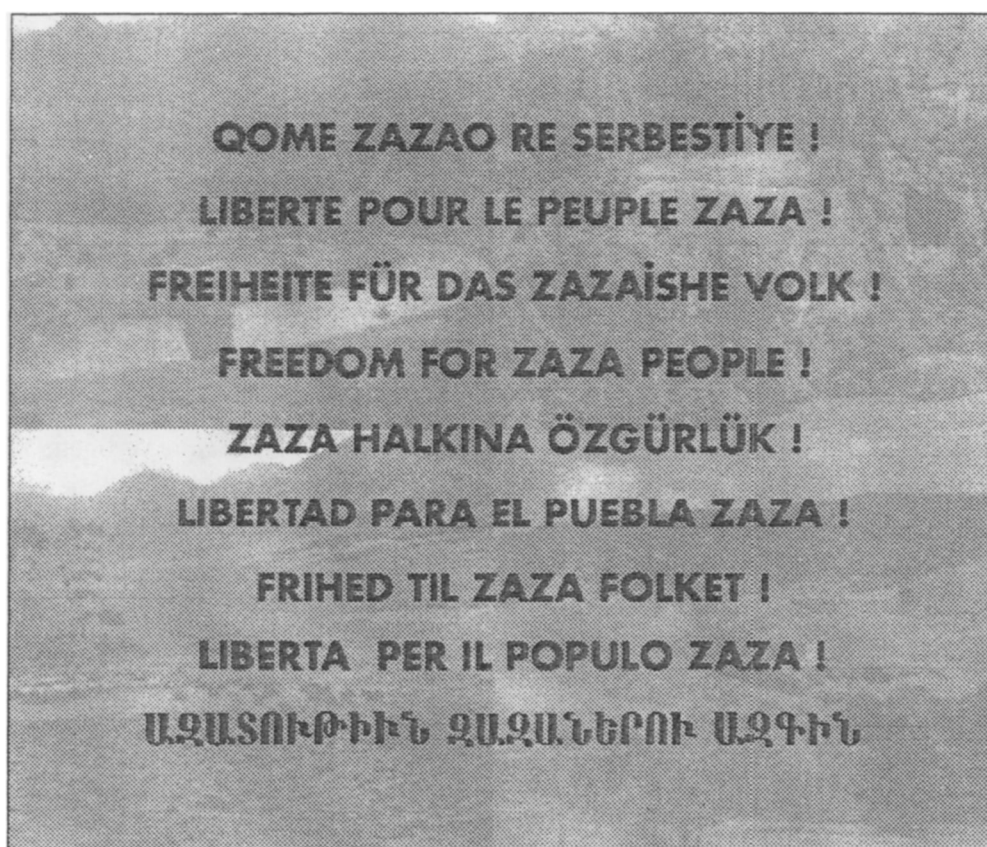
A big contribution to emphasizing and preserving the Zaza ethnic identity was made also by other Zaza leaders: Alishan Karsan, Kamal Astare, Hasan Dawran, Zülfü Selcan, Kahraman Gunduzkanat, Asmen, Munzur Comerd, Koyo Berz, etc.

Thus, the Zaza movement, which had been for years regarded as a part of the Kurdish movement, became an independent power, with its own tasks and purposes. Most of them are presented in the political programme of the "Sarbastia" party, as well as in numerous proclamations and other documents (*See below: Appendices*).

It is interesting to note, that independent Zaza activities have met quite opposite responses. On the one hand, one of the issues of the Turkish newspaper "Hurriet" in 1992 had a curious article entitled "The Kurds were not enough, the Zazas appeared!", with the subtitle *Kürt başka - zaza başka?* "Are the Zazas different from the Kurds?", characterizing these facts as another problem for the Turkish Government. At the same time the Zaza leaders unexpectedly found a lot of enemies among their former Kurdish brothers-in-arms. The matter is that some Kurdish political circles are trying to trace "the hand of Ankara" in separating the Kurdish movement by means of the Zaza factor. One should not, of course, absolutely exclude, that the Turkish political establishment can use the Zaza separatism, but it does not signify the agreement of the Zazas themselves to be used, even indirectly, in anti-Kurdish policy. The enmity toward the

Turks is a historical norm for the Zaza people; it is a part of the Zaza national Weltanschauung, which is found on all levels of the people's life: from folklore (it is manifested in a number of proverbs and sayings, etc.) and to the present position of the Zaza political organizations. At the same time, one can notice such peculiarities of the Zazas' thinking clichés as sympathy towards the Armenians (due to long and peaceful neighbourhood) and to the Iranians (due to the fact, preserved in the national memory, that their ethnic territory was Iran and they migrated to Anatolia from the East).

It is important to emphasize, that unlike some other "conflict" peoples (Baluchis or Kurds), the Zaza national ideology includes the realistic premises and is far from the expansionistic ambitions and purely legendary and unsubstantiated claims towards the history, culture, territories and ethnic composition of the neighbouring peoples, which is typical for the Kurds, for instance. The Zazas do not pretend to be the aborigines of the lands they inhabit now, and all their demands are based on the present ethno-demographic situation in the region.



**FREEDOM FOR THE ZAZA PEOPLE!**

*A political slogan in various languages, including Zaza, Turkish, Armenian and the main European languages.*

**A detail from a poster printed in Paris in the 1980-s**

This important, for the Zaza movement, ideological element was formulated by E. Pamukchu in the following way: "Our people arrived in small groups and at different periods in the region they live at present. When they came from the east in tribes, nationalism was not yet current. Our ancestors were only in need of a land to settle on" (*E. Pamukchu. The Dimili as People.- Piya, Eylul 1988, N 3, pp. 7-8*). Such a position will be definitely more productive in the realization of the Zazas' national ideas and strivings, as their national ideology is built on a realistic historical and ethno-demographic basis.



First the term **Zazaistan** was used by Ebubekir Pamukchu and, according to his own words, had no political meaning (*A. Pamukçu. Dersim Zaza Ayaklanmasının Tarihî Kökenleri. İstanbul, 1992, pp. 3-4*). At present this term has acquired academic legitimacy, and the idea of Zazaistan has become a political reality, so that the Zaza leaders speak about independent Zazaistan (including Dersim and adjoining areas) as about the ultimate goal of the Zaza movement.

The process of national consolidation of the Zazas is accompanied with the formation of national ideology and political culture.

The Zaza political factor is constantly maturing: though at present it can be noticed rather on the national level than on the regional one, its perspectives promise to be rather appreciable.

## Appendices

### I. The Programme of the Serbestîye Party

The purpose of **Koma Serbestiya Ma** is to struggle for our liberty and for the freedom of our homeland and to work towards a democratic and pluralistic society.

**Serbestîye** is a democratic and patriotic organization. We defend the past struggle of our people for liberty and democracy. The principles of decentralization and local management direct our activities. One may voluntarily become a member of our organization and may voluntarily resign. In our organization one may only perform an activity if he or she agrees to it. To us the best way to work is with freedom of thought and faith. We believe that one works voluntarily more effectively than if he or she is forced to do so. We don't expect an absolute uniformity of ideas. Everyone is entitled to own his opinion. The truth is not and can not be uniform in the life of our society.

We reject Turkish or any other domination. We want to live together, amicably, peacefully, and in a democratic manner together with our neighbouring societies and states. This is possible either through political autonomy, a federation, or a confederation. nevertheless, if our neighbours in Anatolia do not agree with this, we will form an independent government.

**Serbestîye** is willing to cooperate with the organizations which struggle for the freedom of their people, which demand cooperation of nations, democracy and friendship, and which acknowledge our identity and our rights. We consider those who demand freedom and democracy in Turkey and Kurdistan our allies.

Our society is one of the oldest of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Iran. Our people were the victims of genocide and much oppression; in spite of this, its present population stands at more than five million. The language, culture, and identity of our ancestors have been preserved until the present day. The Ottoman Empire surrounded our homeland in the 16th century in cooperation with Kurdish rulers and gradually dominated it. Nevertheless, our people had always fought against the oppression of these tyrants and managed to retain independence until 1958.

When the Ottoman Empire lost the First World War, the people under its control rose up and demanded their freedom. The Kirmanj-Zazas, the Armenians, the Greeks, and the Kurds fought for self-determination. First the Armenians were massacred, and then the remainder of them were banished. During the Armenian massacre, the Kurdish *aghas* and *sheikhs* became the pawns of the Turks; but our people, on the other hand, did their best to protect the Armenians. Many Greeks were also massacred; the rest of them were exiled. Between 1918-1921 our people revolted for their freedom in Kochgiri, fought against the Kemalists, and demanded the autonomy of Kirmanjiye also called Dersim (the name of a part of our homeland). The people of Kochgiri were defeated in this fight, and the Turkish state stained our homeland with blood. *Alisher*, one of the leaders of the revolt, and his companions retreated into the region of Dersim. In 1925 the Zazas (from the south of our homeland) revolted under the leadership of Sheikh Said demanding their rights, and many of our people were also massacred there. Places



like Hani, Piran, Palu, Chewlig and Marput were destroyed, the villages were burned down, and the people were exiled. *Sheikh Said* and his companions were hanged in Diyarbekir.

Then it was Dersim's turn. The Turkish army attacked western Dersim in 1926 and Pulumur in eastern Dersim in 1950. Our people forced the Turkish army to retreat, and once again it was unable to achieve dominance over our people. For this reason the Turkish state planned to attack and seize Dersim by fraud. In 1955 the so called "Tunceli Law" was approved by the Turkish parliament in Ankara to change the name of Dersim (or Mamek!) to "*Tunceli*". In 1957 the Turkish army surrounded Dersim and attacked it on all sides, and Turkish soldiers killed all the people they encountered, both young and old. They burned our forests, villages, and fields. *Seid Riza* and other leaders of Dersim were hanged in Harput, and nearly seventy thousand people were massacred. This Dersim Massacre ended in 1958. The remainder of our people were exiled to every part of Turkey. Some fighters of Kirmanjiye continued resisting in the mountains until 1945.

The Turkish state tried to assimilate our people in every aspect. Dersim was then just a forlorn ghost town for a period. After 1960 our people began to recover and to take their place among Turkish leftists, nevertheless, the Turkish left and the Kurdish movement both tried to assimilate and to eliminate us.

After 1980 our intellectuals began to become aware of this process of assimilation, to acknowledge and study our language and culture, and to defend our identity. *Koma Serbestiya Ma* is the result of this development.

Our homeland is very colourful and diverse with respect to its ethnic identity. Some of us call ourselves *Kirmanj*, some *Zaza*, and some *Dimli*; and some prefer to call themselves simply *Ma* ("we"). We acknowledge all of these names as belonging to our culture.

The population of our people living in and around Dersim call themselves *Kirmanj*, their language *Kirmanjiki*, their homeland *Kirmanjiye*, and call their faith Yitiqate Kirmanjiye (the Faith of Kirmanjiye). Some, on the other hand, describe themselves as *Elawi* (*Alawite*), call their language *Zone Ma* (our language), and their homeland *Welate Ma* (our homeland).

Some of our Muslim population describe their language *Zone Ma*, and their homeland *Welate Ma*. Some of our Muslim people call themselves *Dimli* or *Zaza*, their language *Dimilki* or *Zazaki*, and their homeland *Welate Ma*. Most of those who call themselves *Dimli*, also acknowledge the term *Zazaki* for their language and *Zaza* for their ethnic name.

All our people describe our homeland as *Welate Kirmanj-Zazay*.

*Serbestiya* accepts any form of self description which our people choose to use. It does not want to eliminate our diversity and colourfulness. Apart from our language, Kurdish and Turkish are spoken in our homeland. The Armenian language used to be spoken by the Armenians of our homeland as well. Our homeland belongs to all who live there. Nevertheless, we do not accept the relocation of people (who are not native to our homeland) into the areas of our homeland from which the Turkish state exiled our people.

Some of our people emigrated to other regions to find work, some are in political exile and some had to leave the homeland because of the continuing war there. We have a large Diaspora today. We want to defend our people wherever they are. We claim the right of self-determination for our people. We will not accept any agreement made for us by any other than our people; we will reject it! We will cooperate with everyone in our homeland no matter which class they are from, as long as they resist the dominance of those not native to it. We will not accept any act of violence or despotism. We will work voluntarily and peacefully; but we will never give up our policy of self-defense. We will work with our people without hiding anything from them and without putting any distance between ourselves. We will form our future from the present, replacing the ruins of the past with something completely new. We demand a parliamentary, democratic, and pluralistic political system. The foundation of our political system must be the rule of law. We do not wish for uniformity of ideas, ideologies or parties; we do not believe that such a thing is possible, and we reject any kind of dictatorship. The government of our homeland will be selected or discharged by the elections of our people. We aim for local management, i.e. self-administration in our homeland. There must be autonomous local management in every region according to language and cultural differences.

We want to create a secular society; faith must be a private matter for each individual. We reject militarism. However, we are aware that we have to find the right way to defend our people and our homeland.

We demand the emancipation of languages. Everyone must be free to use his or her own language everywhere. We will strive to develop our language and literature.

We aim towards a social system that guarantees the right of literacy, the safe living conditions, and job security for every member of society.

We are in favour of the emancipation of men and women, the rights of children, and human rights in general.

The protection of nature and animals must be also guaranteed.

We want our society to be self-supporting. However, we do not want any industry or technology which is damaging to the environment. We will protect our villages, and we will avoid further urbanization.

### *Conclusion*

Our goals are expressed in the statements above to inform the *Kirmanj-Zaza* people; each person has to decide for himself how he would like to continue his life.

*(The Programme of Serbestiye in the Zaza, English, German, French, Turkish and Kurdish languages. Mannheim, 1997.)*

## **II. The Proclamation of the Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Zaza People**

Up to the 70s of our century very few people had known about the Zazas.

The Zazas, a 5 million people, live in eastern Anatolia – Sivas, Erzinjan, Dersim (Tunceli), Elazik, Bingöl, Bitlis, Balu, Varto, Siverek, Diyarbakir and elsewhere. Until now this people has been considered the Kurds, i.e. “one of the Kurdish tribal confederations”. The historical and linguistic investigations revealed that the Zazas are neither Turks, nor Kurds. The Zazas are North-West Iranian people who migrated to the present inhabited lands during the 9th c. A.D. from the Southern parts of the Caspian sea, in particular from Daylam. The Zazas had the same lot as the Armenians, Kurds and other peoples of our region. Now in the Republic of Turkey their national identity is not recognized, their language and culture are prohibited. Therefor the Zazas demand: to remove the Turkish military forces from Zazaistan, to give the Zazas opportunity of national self-determination according to democratic and humanitarian laws and to put an end to repression and persecutions of the Zazas.

**Long live the language and culture of the Zazas!  
Raise high the Flag of international solidarity!**

*(The Committee of the Protection of the Rights of the Zaza People. Germany, 1992)*

## **III. Zazaistan is being abandoned ! (Abridged)**

In the Northern Zazaistan the Zazas are undergone repression and persecutions due to the only reasons that they are Alevis. In all the wide-spread Alevi Zaza villages with no exception, mosques are built, the Sunni clerics are settled, etc.

But the situation was different in the Northern part of Zazaistan: people live here between tow fires: the Kurdish national movement on one side, trying to involve them in their straggle, and the Turkish military forces against the Kurds, on the other side. These two enemy parties are trying to use the Zaza youth for their purposes. That is true that the Zazas are not indifferent towards the Kurdish national movement, but they do not recognize it as their own either. At the same time our nation will never become a factor in the anti-Kurdish policy. The greatest problem of the Zazas is their disorganization. Being disorganized and without a leader, they are burning between two fires. Thus, we say, that is enough, and appeal to all the Zazas migrants to return to their Motherland. We are turning to you, our compatriots. Reconstruct your homeland with its nature, villages and towns. May our traditional songs and dances spread in our villages.

**Come back to Zazaistan !**

Today we already have the **Raya Zazaistani** (*the Way of Zazaistan*) organization, which adopted the policy of struggle for freedom of their country and establishment of democracy of our Motherland.

Join us to struggle against the repression of the Turkish soldiers, gendarmes and officials. The liberation military groups are the only hope for the safety of our nation. Trust them, join them, support them.

**Long live Raya Zazaistani !**  
**Long live our liberation forces !**  
**Long live Zazaistan !**  
**Long live the people of Zazaistan !**

Break the artificial wall between the Sunnis and Alevis created by the provocation of the colonialists of Zazaistan. Break it down with your iron force.

Hand to hand, shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart, strengthen the revolutionary struggle of national liberation and democracy.

(«Zazaistan Boşaliyor!», in: *Zazaistan*, N 2, 1991, Skärholmen, pp.1-2)

#### **IV. LIGA FÜR DIE FREIHEIT DER ZAZA-DIMILI-KIRMANC WURDE GEGRÜNDET**

In den letzten Jahren führte die patriotische Intelligenz der Zaza bedeutende Arbeiten auf dem Gebiet der Sprache, Kultur und der Politik durch. Diese Arbeiten waren jedoch zerstreut und in politischer Hinsicht unzureichend gewesen. Angesichts der Lage, in der sich unser Volk befindet, und der vielseitigen und massiven Angriffe gegen unser Heimatland, wurde es dringend erforderlich, eine politische Bewegung zu gründen. Zu diesem Zwecke wurden 1995 entsprechende Vorbereitungen getroffen; am 22-24 November 1996 fand eine Gründungskonferenz statt, an der zahlreiche Delegierte aus verschiedenen Orten unsere Heimat teilnahmen. Gegen die barbarische Herrschaft türkischer Kolonialisten in unserem Heimatland und ihre Kriegszerstörung sowie gegen die neue territoriale Beanspruchung unserer Heimat, kommt der Gründung unserer Bewegung eine historische Bedeutung zu.

Der Hauptbeschluß der Konferenz lautet: die türkische Invasion in Zaza-Land muß beendet werden, alle fremden politisch-militärischen Kräfte sollen unser Land verlassen. Unser Heimatland, unsere Sprache und Kultur müssen von der Unterdrückung befreit werden. Unser Volk sollte selbst über sein Schicksal entscheiden. Unser Volk soll über seine Souveränität selbst verfügen.

Der Kurzname unserer Organization laut *Serbestiye* "die Freiheit"; *Kome Serbestiya Mâ* "Liga für unsere Freiheit" ist ein demokratischer und patriotischer Zusammenschluß. Die Konferenz befaßte sich mit dem zur Diskussion vorgelegten Programmwurf und nahm ihn an. Die Konferenz beschloß, die Selbstbezeichnung unseres Volkes als Grundlage zu nehmen. **Zaza-Dimili-Kirmanc** sind die regionalen Benennungen unseres Volkes. Dies lautet mit der Kurzform das **Zaza-Kirmanc-Volk** (*Miletê Kirmanc-Zazay*) und das **Zaza-Kirmanc-Land** (*Welatê Kirmanc-Zazay*). Die Konferenz beschäftigte sich mit der Organisationsform, sowie mit den künftig durchzuführenden Arbeiten und beschloß folgendes: bei der Organisation und der Arbeit gilt das Prinzip der örtlichen Initiative. Das Programm stellt den Rahmen für den Zusammenschluß dar. Jede Aktivität muß den dortigen Bedingungen entsprechend organisiert und gestaltet werden. Die Aufgabe des Koordinationskomitees besteht darin, diese Arbeiten aufeinander abzustimmen, gemeinsam Kampagnen zu planen, die Publikationen vorzubereiten und das Budget zu verwalten. Die Mitglieder und die lokalen Vertretungen sind nicht gezwungen, einen Beschluß, den sie nicht befürworten, auch einzuhalten; sie erfüllen nur das, was sie akzeptieren. Der Beitritt und die Mitarbeit basieren auf Freiwilligkeit. Die Vieltimmigkeit innerhalb des Programmrahmens liegt in der Natur der Sache.

Unsere Liga tritt dafür ein, mit den demokratischen Kräften des türkischen und des kurdis-

chen Volkes, mit denen wir benachbart sind, zusammenzuarbeiten, und betrachten dies im Interesse unseres Volkes. Gerade deshalb, weil der blinde türkische Nationalismus einen Haß zwischen die Völker schürt, ist dies besonders zu betonen. Es ist allerdings unmöglich mit denjenigen zusammenzuarbeiten, die unsere ethnische Identität ableugnen, unser Heimatland für sich beanspruchen und unser Volk bevormunden. Diesbezüglich befaßte sich die Konferenz mit den Behauptungen der kurdischen Nationalisten, und gelangte zu folgender Auffassung: die Behauptungen *kurdischer Dialekt*, unsere Sprache betreffend, und *Zaza-Kurde*, bezüglich unseres Volkes, wurden verurteilt und zurückgewiesen. Diese nationalistische Haltung, welche eine Solidarisierung mit dem ebenfalls unterdrückten Kurden-Volk blockiert, muß aufgegeben werden.

Unsere Geschichte und unsere humanistischen kulturellen Traditionen dürfen von keinem vereinnahmt werden. Die Volkswiderstände von 1918-20, 1925, 1937-38 gehören zur Geschichte unseres Freiheitskampfes. Unsere Geschichte wurde von anderen verfaßt und uns beraubt worden. Wir wollen sie wieder zurück haben. Die von türkischen Nationalisten übernommene Geschichtsverfälschung durch kurdische Autoren muß beendet werden.

Die Konferenz diskutierte über den Krieg, den in Zaza-Land, in Kurdistan und in der Türkei, und stellte fest: der Krieg, den die Türkische Republik (TR) gegen das Zaza- und das Kurden-Volk durchführt, ist ungerecht und kolonialistisch. Die TR will ihre beiden letzten Kolonien, das Zaza-Land und das Kurdistan, mit allen Mitteln weiter unter ihrem Joch halten, und führt darum einen dreieckigen Krieg durch, wobei sie gegen jede internationale Norm verstößt. Dieser Krieg und seine Folgen wirft das türkische Volk in den Schoß des Faschismus. Die Türkische Republik hat sich inzwischen in einen von Kopf bis Fuß verdorbenen und terroristischen Mafia-Staat verwandelt.

Dieser Krieg richtete die größte Zerstörung in unserer Heimat an. In Dersim (Tunceli), Erzinçan, Sivas, Bingöl (Çewlig), Elâzığ, Diyarbakır (Piran), Terikhan, Hani, Maden, Varto, Hınıs wurden mehr als tausend unserer Dörfer zwangsgeräumt. Allein in Dersim wurden von 420 Dörfern 300 zwangsgeräumt; über unser Volk wurde eine Nahrungsmittelsperre verhängt, und unsere Landsleute sind gezwungen, die Besatzer um Erlaubnis zu bitten, wenn sie sogar ein Kilo Mehl oder Zucker einkaufen wollen. In unserem Heimatland wird eine ethnische Entvölkerung durchgeführt. Unser Volk wird aus seiner Heimat vertrieben und unser Land evakuiert.

In diesen Krieg sind zwar auch Söhne des Zaza Volkes verwickelt. Aber unser Volk ist weder eigenwillig daran beteiligt, noch ist er darin vertreten. Wir unterstützen den Freiheitskampf der Kurden gegen die TR; wir lehnen jedoch die weitgehende Forderung kurdischer Nationalisten und ihre Politik, unser Land territorial für sich zu beanspruchen, entschieden ab. Wenn man den gegenwärtigen Krieg und seine Folgen bewertet, wird offensichtlich, daß der Verlierer unser Volk ist. Wer auch diesen Krieg gewinnen mag, wir verlieren ihn. Die Kriegsparteien sollen unser Land verlassen, und die verursachten Kriegsschäden ersetzen.

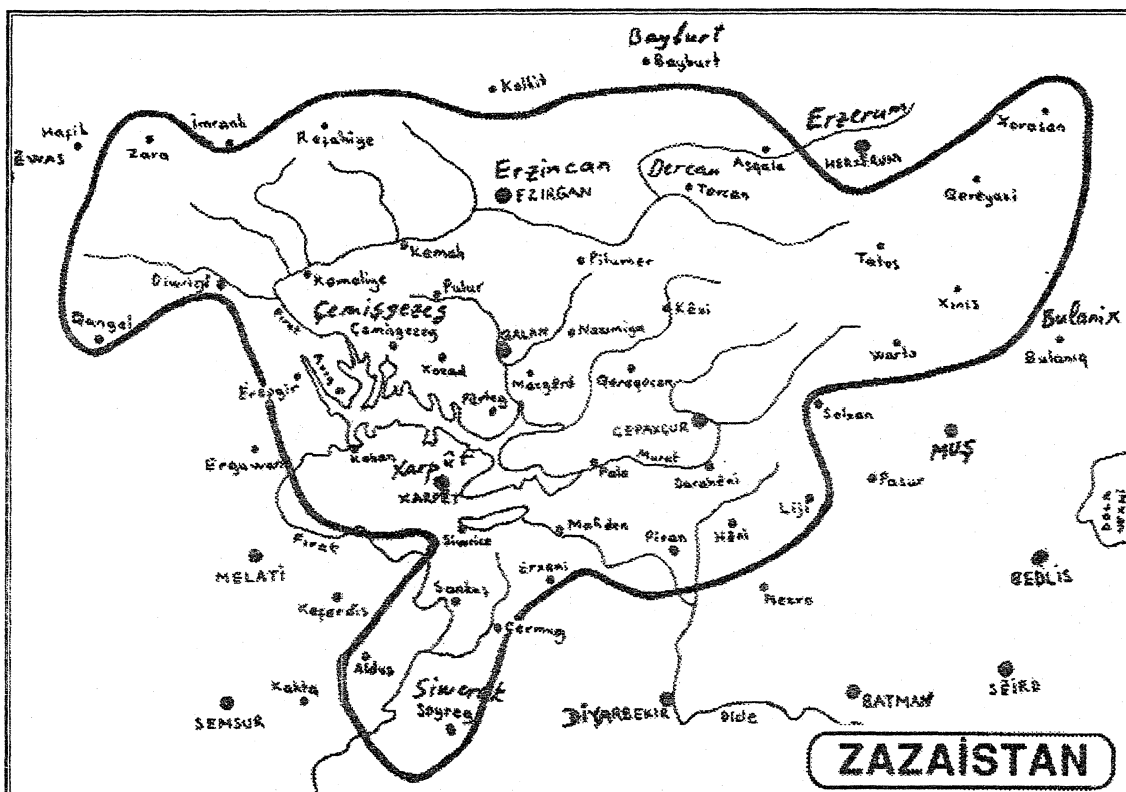
Der Krieg soll in kürzester Zeit beendet werden. Es sollte den Völkern selbst überlassen werden, ob sie selbständig oder in einem gemeinsamen Staat leben wollen. Die Beharrung türkischer Militärs auf einer gewaltsamen Lösung und einer totalen Liquidierung kommt den Völkern teuer zu stehen, und erschwert ein nachbarschaftliches Zusammenleben immer mehr.

Für einen anhaltenden Frieden müssen die Dörfer restauriert werden, der Zaza, der asyrischen und der kurdischen Bevölkerung soll die Rückkehr in ihre Heimatdörfer ermöglicht werden. Die Institutionen der Dorfwächter und der sogenannten Sonderteams soll aufgelöst, der Ausnahmezustand aufgehoben, und eine Generalamnestie soll erlassen werden. Der über die Sprachen Zaza, Kurdisch, Asyrisch, Lasisch u.a. verhängte Verbot soll aufgehoben werden. Allen ethnischen Volksgruppen und anderen Gemeinschaften soll die uneingeschränkte Möglichkeit für freie politische Betätigung anerkannt werden.

Unsere Konferenz machte weiterhin auf folgendes aufmerksam: ohne Berücksichtigung der nationalen und demokratischen Rechte unseres Volkes ist eine gerechte Lösung nicht möglich, niemand sollte ohne Mitberücksichtigung unseres Volkes etwas planen. Das Zaza-Volk wird

sämtliche Beschlüsse über seine unter Hypothek gestellte Gegenwart und Zukunft für richtig erklären.

Die türkischen und kurdischen demokratischen Kräfte sollten die Lage Neubewerten, Fehler und Irrtümer korrigieren. Das bisherige Status quo schadet nämlich den Beziehungen zwischen den Völkern. Niemand kann durch Ignorieren der legitimen Forderungen eines mehr als 5 Millionen zählenden Volkes, ein Demokrat werden. Unsere Konferenz appelliert an die zaza-stäm-



The map of Zazaistan

migen Aktivisten in türkischen und kurdischen Organisationen, ihre Beziehungen zu überdenken. Unser Volk ist einer akuten Existenzbedrohung ausgesetzt. Angesichts der Sklaverei, in der sich unser Volk befindet, sowie der Aussterbegefahr unserer Sprache und Kultur, werdet ihr euch der Geschichte gegenüber mitschuldig machen, wenn ihr euch nicht rührt, oder sogar euch gegen uns stellt. Setzt eurer Abhängigkeit ein Ende und unterstützt die auf der Basis der Unabhängigkeit gegründete *Serbestiye*.

*Serbestiye* wird ihren Kampf auf allen Gebieten nach demokratischen Prinzipien durchführen. *Serbestiye* wird die Rechte des Zaza-Volkes sowohl im Heimatland, als auch der aus ihrer Heimat in die Metropole der Türkei vertriebenen Bevölkerung verteidigen.

Wir lehnen die Gewaltanwendung in der politischen Auseinandersetzung ab. Aber wir nutzen unser Recht auf Selbstverteidigung. Unsere Geschichte lehrt dies uns durch zahlreiche Beispiele. Die Volkswiderstände von Kockiri, Piran und Dersim weisen uns den Weg.

Für die Durchbrechung des unserem Volk auferlegten kolonialistischen Jochs, und für die Gründung eines freien und demokratischen Zaza-Kirmanc-Landes, rufen wir zum gemeinsamen Kampf und zu Solidarität auf.

**LIGA FÜR UNSERE FREIHEIT**  
*Die Gründungskonferenz*